

Industry panel discussion highlights tipping point for retrofit

3 years ago



The retrofit industry is at a tipping point ahead of a period of development and growth, an industry panel discussion at Innovation Zero 2023 has concluded.

The panel, entitled *Retrofitting the Built Environment* and moderated by The Retrofit Academy chief executive officer David Pierpoint, discussed the optimism within the industry and the desire to drive momentum and progress further.

Present on the panel was The Global Network for Zero founder and CEO Mahesh Ramanujam; Federation of Master Buildings chief executive Brian Berry; Foster + Partners partner and architect Doretta Bevilacqua Gilkes; Allford Hall Monaghan Morris executive director Simon Allford; and Faithful + Gould associate director Jack Saunders.

As the market for retrofit grows, the panel highlighted the need for more consistent, long-term direction and strategy from the Government to incentivise and accelerate retrofit programmes in the UK. Another challenge highlighted was the need to educate building occupiers and tenants about the need to retrofit and work on incentives to drive forward large-scale rollout.

Crucial to this rollout is a qualified workforce of competent retrofitters who can deliver the scale of programmes required by building owners and their appointed contractors. Particularly for social housing providers and local authorities who have had funding made available in the form of the Social Housing Development Fund (SDHF) and Home Upgrade Grant (HUG), addressing the skills gap for delivering high-quality, large-scale retrofit is a central focus.

Mr Pierpoint said: "We must focus on developing a large, qualified workforce because without the people

to carry out the retrofitting programme, the targets for completing homes will not be met. Our role at The Retrofit Academy is to drive the development of this workforce, supporting organisations by assessing their skills and training requirements and providing solutions to address gaps.

“We are at the beginning of a time of exciting growth in the industry and funding is being directed to the right places. 5,000 learners are already enrolled with us, and we are supporting clients with understanding their workforce requirements and where to develop to reach goals. However, as the panel discussion has highlighted, a long-term approach must be adopted by all stakeholders to keep momentum and meet decarbonisation targets.”